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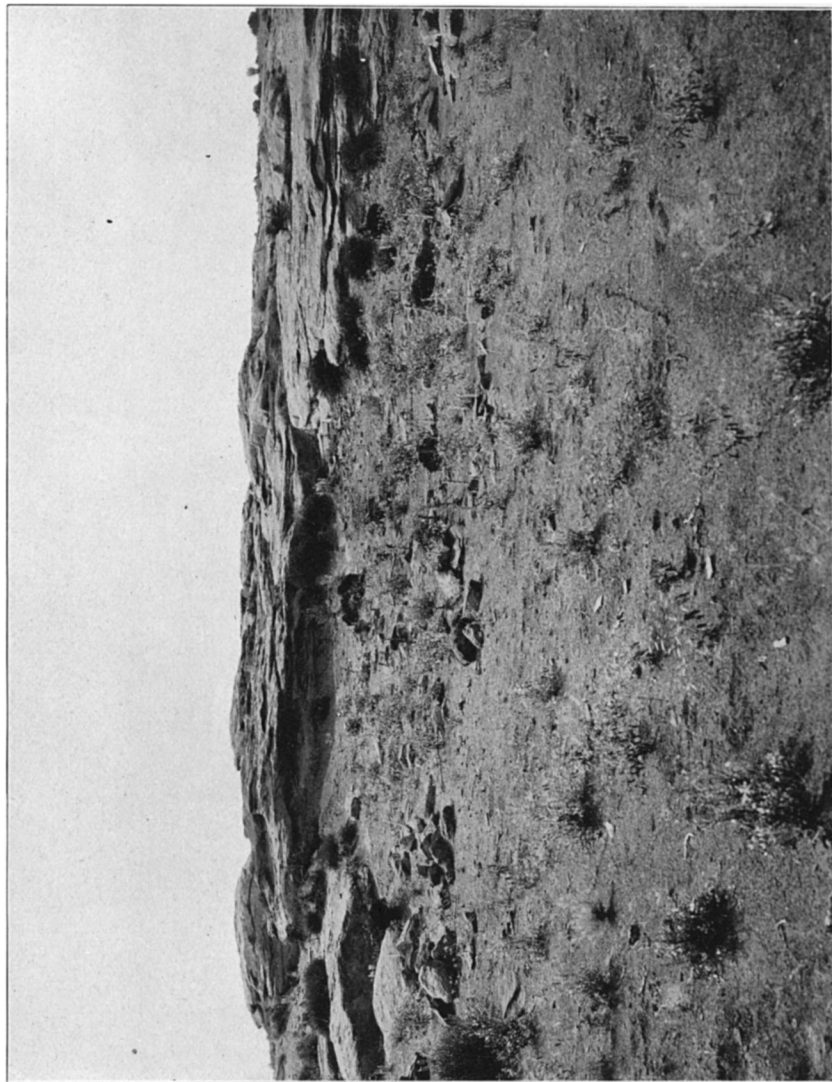
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II. NOTES ON THE EAGLE CULT OF THE HOPI

BY

H. R. VOTH.

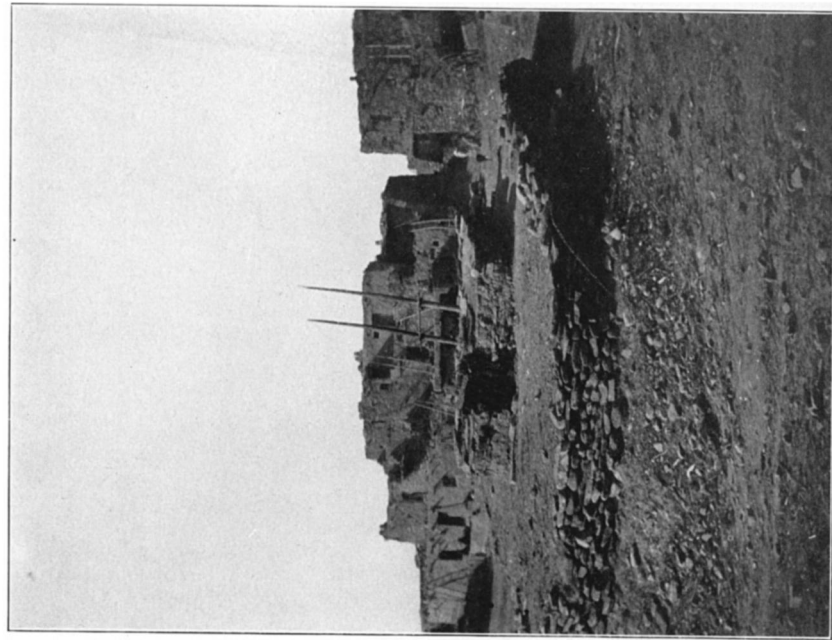


PL. XLI.

Eagle burial ground.



A



B

PL. XLII.

- A. An eagle in captivity on the roof of a house.
- B. One of the kivas, or ceremonial chambers, in which most of the eagle feathers are used for ceremonial purposes.



PL. XLIII.

Dolls, representing the Eagle Katsina.

NOTES ON THE EAGLE CULT AMONG THE HOPI INDIANS.

As among other uncivilized people, the eagle plays a very conspicuous part in the conception of the traditions of the Hopi, especially in their religious rites and ceremonies. There are Eagle clans, Eagle Katcinas, special prayer offerings for the eagles, eagle burying grounds (see Plate XLI), etc.

The territory around the Hopi villages where eagles may be found is, and has been from time immemorial, divided into portions or allotments, which are controlled by certain clans and families. These territories extend as far as 50 and 60 miles from the villages. The information, regarding this apportionment, is somewhat vague, but I am led to believe that originally the Eagle clan, and later also clans related to the Eagle clan, were the only ones that "owned" the eagles, while it appears that at present families of other clans also share that privilege.¹ It is said that at present, the Bear, Spider, Reed, Young corn, Burrowing Owl, Blue Bird, Bow, Lizard, Badger and Eagle clan of Oraibi control eagle territory.

Every spring hunting expeditions set out to procure young eagles. These, when captured in their roosts, are usually tied to racks (see Plate XLIX) and carried to the villages where they are kept on the flat house tops, tied by one leg to some beam, rock or peg to prevent their escape (see Plate XLII). Here they are fed with rabbits, field mice, etc., until about July, when they have grown to full size. The number of birds, thus captured, varies very much in different years. One year there were thirty-five in the village of Oraibi alone. Among these are usually also various kinds of hawks, especially a certain large kind, which the Hopi call palakwahu "red-eagle," the feathers of which are used very extensively for prayer offerings, masks, eagle shafts etc.

In nearly all the principal ceremonies the eagles are remembered by prayer offerings, prepared for them by the priests. These consist usually of small eagle or hawk feathers, tied to a twisted cotton string, about four inches long, and are called nakwakwosis. These nakwakwosis are handed to those priests who are part owners in an eagle allotment,

¹ Compare "Property-Right in Eagles among the Hopi" by Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. II, No. 4.

and who deposit them with some sacred meal in shrines, devoted to the eagles.¹

During the winter and spring months, when the Katcina cult flourishes in all the villages, and Katcinas of the greatest variety may be seen in the different ceremonies and dances, Eagle Katcinas, *i. e.*, masked Hopi representing eagles, or more properly speaking an Eagle deity, may occasionally be seen. The typical features of this personage are a mask with an artificial eagle beak and otherwise representing the head of an eagle; sometimes large eagle feathers are fastened to the arms and to the back part of the costume representing the wings and tail of the eagle (see Plate XLIII). These Katcinas receive prayer offerings at the dances, which they deposit at Katcina shrines "that the eagles may not fail to lay eggs and hatch them again the next year."

On the day after the great Niman (Farewell) Katcina ceremony in July all the eagles in the village, except here and there one that is not fully grown, are killed. This killing is done at about eight or nine o'clock in the morning. While one person holds the rope, another throws a blanket over the eagle and carries him down from the roof, choking him while he descends (see Plate XLIV). No eagle is killed by any other method. When life is extinct the feathers are plucked and carefully assorted (see Plate XLV). When the larger feathers have all been pulled the body of the eagle is flayed and the skin with the remaining feathers also carefully dried and preserved on account of the feathers. Nakwakwosis are then tied to the wings and legs of the carcass "that the eagles should not be angry but hatch young eagles again the next year." During this time a small tray, a small flat doll and a few rolls of blue piki (the thin, typical Hopi bread), about four inches long and about one inch thick, are prepared. When these preparations are completed the carcass, the prayer offerings and a pointed stick are taken to one of the grave-yards especially devoted to eagles (see Plate XLI). Here a hole is dug in the ground with the pointed stick, and the eagle body, with the food, placed into it (see Plate XLVII). These grave-yards are usually located from half to three-quarters of a mile from the village.

The feathers, thus obtained from the eagles, are used for many different purposes, mostly, however, ceremonial. The smaller ones mostly for nakwakwosis, that have only one twisted string and for pūhus, that have one twisted and one single string attached to them. Of these two kinds thousands are made on many different occasions

¹ Mr. C. L. Owen, who just returned from the Hopi-land says: "Small vessels are often placed near rocks where eagles are supposed to hatch and to roost, which are from time to time filled with water and also a pinch of meal sprinkled on it. (See Pl. L).

PL. XLIV. CATCHING AND KILLING THE EAGLE.

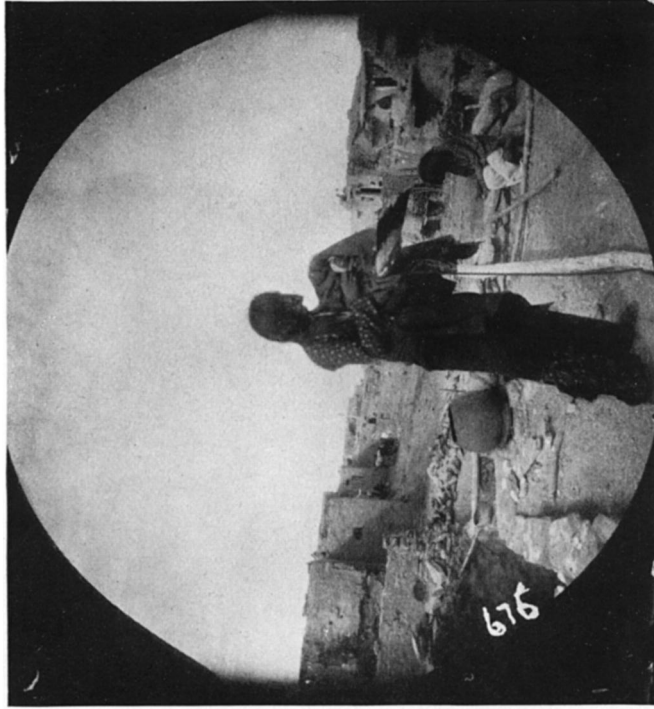
- A. The capture on the roof of the house.
- B. Choking the bird.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.



A

ANTHROPOLOGY, PL. XLIV.



B

PL. XLV.

- A. Plucking the eagle.
- B. Assorting the feathers.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.



A

ANTHROPOLOGY, PL. XLV.

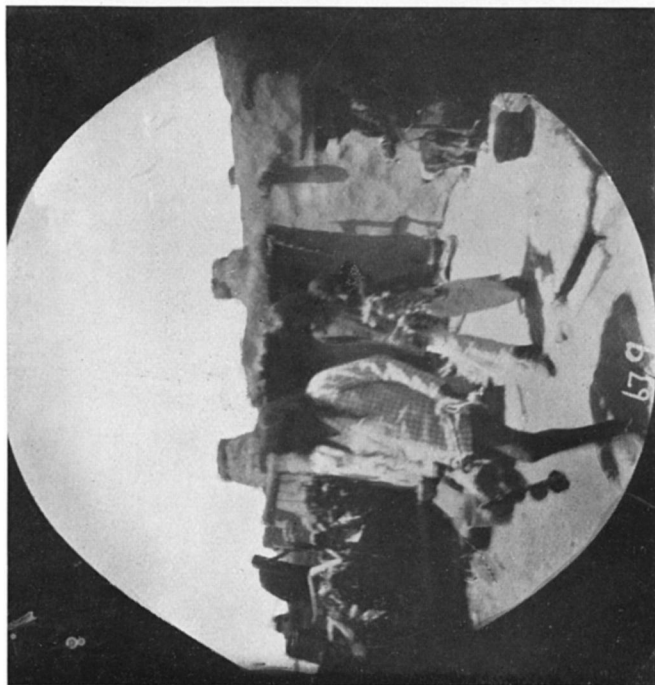


B

PL. LXVI.

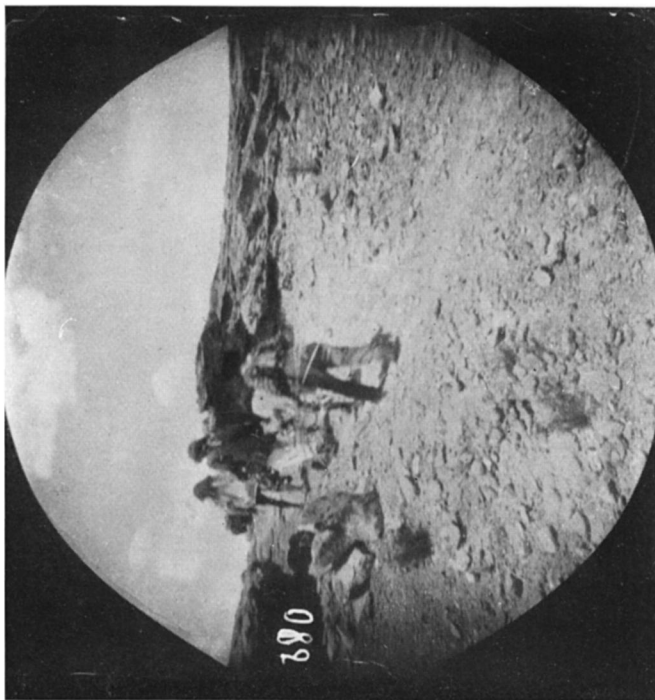
- A. Leaving the village with the eagle bodies.
- B. Arriving at the burial ground.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.



A

ANTHROPOLOGY, PL. XLVI.

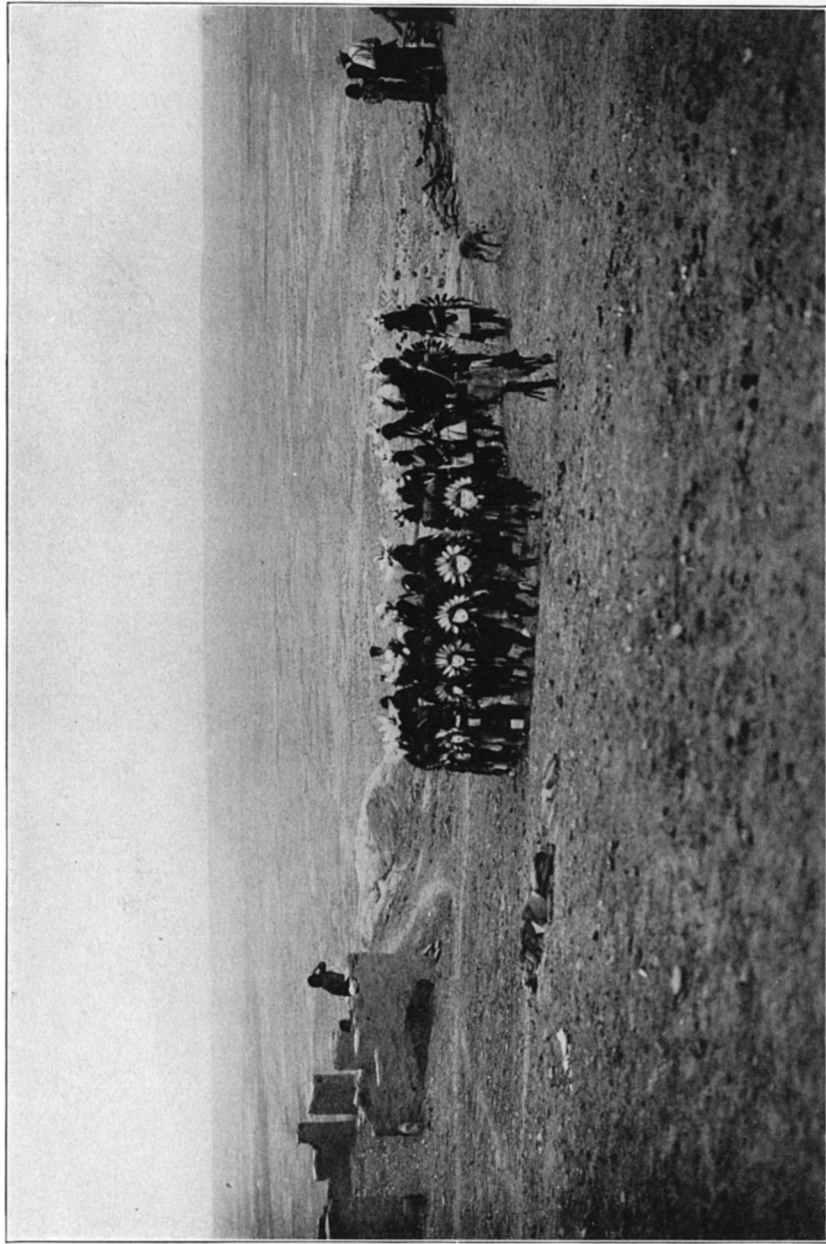


B

PL. LXVII.

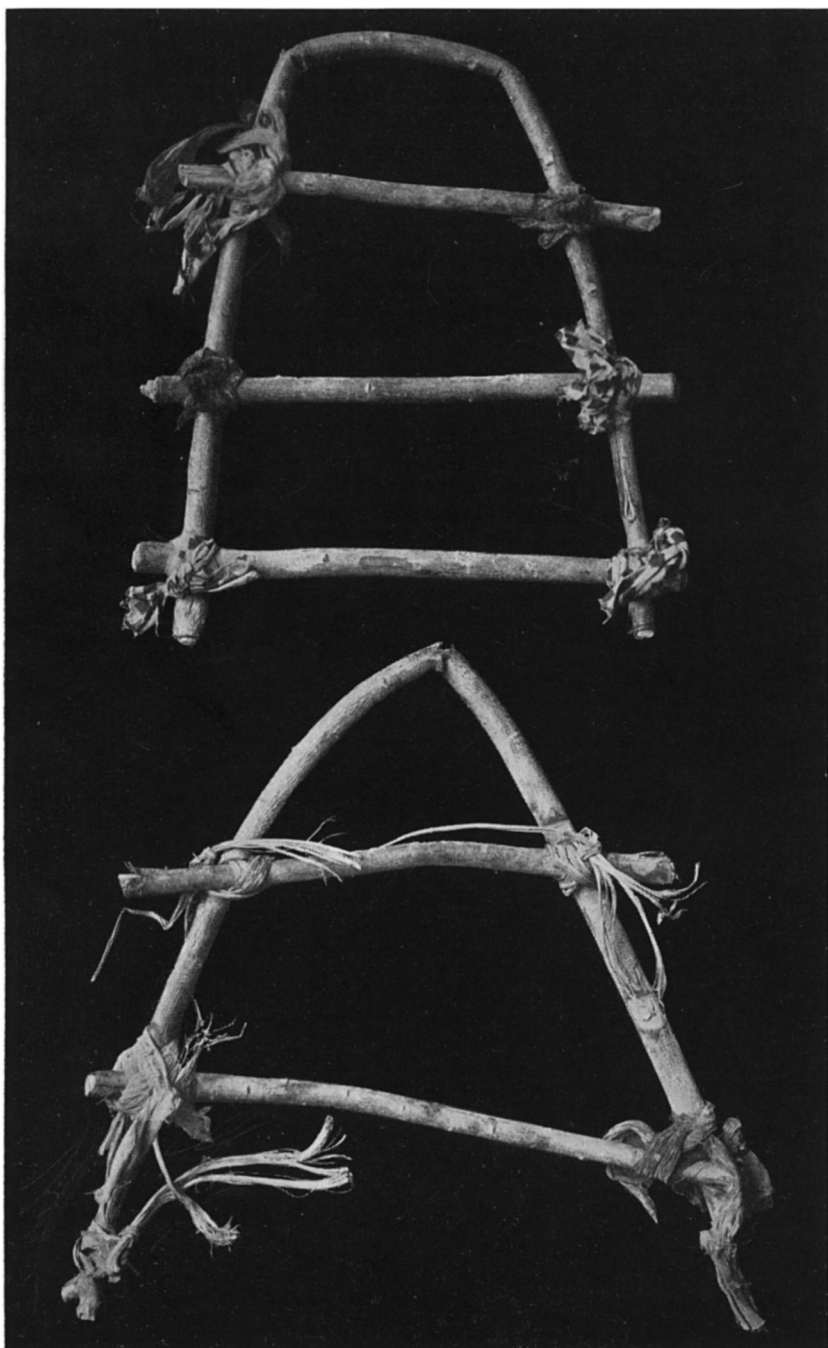
Burying the eagles.





PL. XLVIII.

Priests with sun symbols on their backs, in which eagle tail feathers represent the rays of the sun.



PL. XLIX.

Racks on which the young eagles are fastened and carried to the villages after their capture.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

ANTHROPOLOGY, PL. L.



PL. L.

Pots in which water is kept for the eagles near their roosts.

during the year. The larger feathers are used on masks, standards, altars, arrow shafts, and for many other purposes. The typical Hopi sun symbol is profusely decorated with eagle tail feathers which, in this case, represent the rays of the sun. In the great Flute ceremony every Flute player wears such a sun symbol on his back as a part of his ceremonial costume. He also wears on the head a ring of corn-husks, into which are thrust eagle breath feathers, while other participants in this, and in fact in most Hopi ceremonies, have a smaller eagle feather fastened to their scalp lock (see Plate XLVIII).

In all ceremonies of any importance whistles are used that are often made of eagle bones and the chief priest uses an eagle¹ wing feather when he discharms the participants in the ceremony from the charm, peculiar to that order of ceremony. To the "tassels" on the corners of the bridal costume eagle nakwakwosis are tied and an eagle feather pūhu (road) is placed to the west of the grave of departed Hopi to show them the road to the skeleton house. Also certain prayer offerings, which are placed on the grave, are made of an eagle feather. Other eagle feather roads, with a longer string, are placed by the Hopi doctors on the paths that lead from the village to show the evil spirits of disease the road on which they are requested to leave their victims whom the Medicine man has discharmed, and the village. The natsi or society emblem of the Lagon and the Oaqöl fraternity contain two eagle tail feathers and certain standards and other ceremonial objects of other societies are decorated with the same feather. The whips which the Snake priests take with them on their Snake hunts and use in the Snake dance consist of a handle with two large eagle wing feathers fastened to it, and to the point of which is fastened a small fuzzy eagle feather which is painted red. A number of similar, small red feathers fastened to short twisted cotton strings form the prayer offerings, which the Snake hunter, also takes with him and which he throws with some sacred meal to the reptile which he intends to capture for the ceremony.

¹ Usually, however, a buzzard feather is used for this purpose.